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NJMC Brings Stars to the Public through the William D. McDowell Observatory

Public viewing nights, programs begin this month

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s new William D. McDowell Observatory will be open to the public Monday and Wednesday evenings beginning Sept. 8, providing northern New Jersey residents with a state-of-the-art telescope in their own backyard.

“The NJMC is thrilled to share this magnificent new resource with the public,” said Joseph Doria, Chairman of the NJMC and Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. “The telescope is an extraordinary teaching tool that brings the wonders of the universe into the Meadowlands.”

The observatory houses a research-grade, optical telescope with a 20-inch mirror within a six-meter retractable dome. Special filters minimize light pollution for optimum viewing. The powerful telescope is capable of viewing objects millions of light years away.

The telescope also includes specialized cameras that can record an array of celestial objects from planets to galaxies. Additional instruments can measure the brightness of stars, study their changes over time and analyze the light emitted by planets, stars and other celestial objects to determine their chemical composition and other physical characteristics.

In addition to public viewing nights, the NJMC is offering programs for kids and adults to learn about the sun, the moon and the stars.

- Those under 18 can learn to use a Sunspotter, Solarscope, Coronado solar telescopes and more during “Fun in the Sun” on Sept. 20. The focus shifts from day to night on Oct. 11 with “Moon Madness,” an introductory explanation of Earth’s nearest neighbor for those ages 10-18.
- Teens and adults can participate in “Let’s Talk Astronomy” sessions that meet once a week, for a month, on Tuesdays from 7 to 9 p.m. Topics include “Ancient History: The Development of Modern Astronomy” in September, “The Solar

System” in October, “The Lifecycle of Stars” in November and “Galaxies, The Universe & Cosmology” in December.

“Astronomy is a fascinating subject that encompasses several branches of science including biology, chemistry and physics,” said Robert Ceberio, Executive Director of the NJMC. “Through our public viewing nights and educational programming we look forward to inspiring curiosity and further learning about the universe among children and adults.”

William D. McDowell was the NJMC’s first Executive Director. He was also the first Bergen County Executive and served as Bergen County Sheriff, Director of the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders and as a Councilman and Mayor in his hometown of North Arlington. Mr. McDowell died in April 2007 at age 80.

Detailed program information, including contact information, cost and how to register, is attached. To schedule coverage of any events please contact Brian Aberback at 201-460-4619 or brian.aberback@njmeadowlands.gov.